

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
**Eastern Sierra & Inland Deserts Region**

**DEER ZONE X9B and ARCHERY HUNT A17**  
**Deer Hunting Information**

This information has been prepared to assist you in getting ready for a hunt after you have received a general season deer tag for Zone X9B or an A17 archery deer tag in Zone X9B. Zone X9B is located entirely within Inyo County. The zone is bounded by the Inyo/Fresno and the Inyo/Tulare county lines on the west and U.S. Highway 395 on the east. The zone boundaries as found in the CALIFORNIA HUNTING REGULATIONS (MAMMALS AND FURBEARERS) are as follows:

That portion of Inyo county within a line beginning at the intersection of Highway 395 and Cottonwood Creek; northwest along Cottonwood Creek to the Horseshoe Meadow Road; south along the Horseshoe Meadow Road to the Cottonwood Pass Trail; west along the Cottonwood Pass Trail through Horseshoe Meadow to the Inyo-Tulare county line at Cottonwood Pass; north on the Inyo-Tulare and the Inyo-Fresno county lines to the Piute Pass Trail; east along the Piute Pass Trail to the North Lake Road; east and south on the North Lake Road to Highway 168; north and east on Highway 168 to Highway 395; south on Highway 395 to the point of beginning.

All hunters should be familiar with regulations in the current CALIFORNIA HUNTING REGULATIONS (MAMMALS AND FURBEARERS) booklet available online at the Department of Fish and Game's website: [www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/biggame/biggamehunting.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/biggame/biggamehunting.html). Laws, designed to conserve wildlife and provide an equitable distribution of game animals, are expected to encourage hunter ethics. Those who know and understand the rules can expect an enjoyable hunting experience. Articles on big game hunting and information about how to apply for deer tags may be found in the current year's BIG GAME HUNTING booklet available where hunting licenses are sold or online at [www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/biggame/biggamehunting.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/biggame/biggamehunting.html)

Zone X9B is an ecologically diverse zone comprised of numerous plant communities ranging from desert scrub at the lowest elevations (3,700 feet) near Lone Pine to alpine at the highest elevations (10,000-14,000 feet) along the Sierra Nevada Crest. The highest peak in the continental United States, Mt Whitney (14,496 feet), can be found in this zone. The majority of the zone is public land administered by the Inyo National Forest of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), (760) 873-2408, or the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bishop Resource Area (760) 872-4881 or Ridgecrest office (760) 384-5400. Private lands are found primarily at low elevations and near towns. You must obtain written permission to hunt on private property; hunter trespass laws are strictly enforced.

U.S. Highway 395 is the primary route of access through the zone. This major north-south highway parallels the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada between the City of Bishop to the north and the town of Lone Pine to the south. Highway 168 is the only other major highway within the zone going west out of Bishop. Other improved roads include Whitney Portal Road and Horseshoe Meadows Road out of Lone Pine and Glacier Lodge Road out of Big Pine. These highways and roads provide access to dozens of improved and unimproved dirt roads that penetrate the Zone's interior. Access at higher elevations is generally limited to hiking trails. Many of these trails are fairly steep and can include considerable elevational gains.

## **OVERVIEW OF DEER DISTRIBUTION AND MOVEMENT**

Deer ranging east of the Sierra Nevada crest in Inyo and Mono counties (Zones X9A, X9B, X9C, and X12) are a subspecies of mule deer known as Inyo mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus inyoensis*). The Inyo mule deer can be distinguished by its large white rump patch and a tail that is black only at the tip. Deer in Zone X9B are migratory, spending summers at higher elevations (8,000-14,000 feet) in the Sierra Nevada and winters at lower elevations (4,500-7,500 feet) in Inyo County, California. Deer migration between these summer and winter ranges occurs twice annually, once during spring and then again in the fall.

Migrations generally follow traditional routes oriented along major topographic features, such as drainages or the bases of mountain ranges. Spring migration from the winter range is generally triggered by the “green-up” of nutritious annual grasses and forbs. During spring migration, deer gradually move from lower to higher elevations as they forage on these emerging plants and slowly regain body condition lost over the winter. Deer arrive on the summer range by mid-May, and pregnant does begin to establish fawning territories in areas containing thick cover, adequate water, and quality forage. Fawns are born in July, and by early August they are large enough to follow the doe as she moves about her summer home range.

Fall migration back to the winter range is generally patterned by snow storms and freezing temperatures at the higher elevations. This migration generally begins in late October and follows the same traditional routes used by deer in the spring. During heavy fall snowstorms, deer will migrate together from the summer range, often making the trip to the winter range in just a few days. As the snowline lowers and the days become progressively shorter, deer concentrate on the winter range for the breeding season, which begins in mid-November. During the cold winter months, deer survive on their stored fat reserves and a subsistence diet composed mainly of a few select shrubs. Deer remain on the winter range until mid-April, after which they begin their spring migration to the higher elevations.

## **THE GOODALE DEER HERD AND ITS HABITAT**

The deer herd found within the boundaries of Zone X9B is referred to as the Goodale deer herd. The Goodale deer herd exists mainly between 4,500 and 9,000 feet elevation. These elevations support Great Basin type vegetation. The winter range contains sagebrush scrub and pinyon woodland plant communities. Sagebrush scrub occurs at the lower elevations from approximately 4,500 to 6,500 feet. Common species associated with this plant community include big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, Mormon tea, rabbitbrush, buckwheat, Indigo bush, black brush, and native bunchgrasses. The pinyon woodland plant community occurs from approximately 6,500 to 9,500 feet. Pinyon pine is the dominant tree and big sagebrush is the dominant shrub in this area. Other common species include antelope bitterbrush, Mormon tea, rabbitbrush, and mountain mahogany. Common herbaceous species are June grass, Indian rice grass, and squirreltail grass. The upper elevational area is dominated by Jeffrey pine forest.

Subalpine forest occurs from 9,500 feet to 11,500 feet in elevation. The Jeffrey pine, whitebark pine, foxtail pine, and limber pine are the dominant tree species in this plant community up to the treeline. Common shrubs include sagebrush, mountain mahogany, mountain whitethorn, chinquapin, fernbush, and creambush. The alpine tundra plant community occurs from 11,500 to 14,496 feet (Mount Whitney peak). Vegetation is extremely sparse at these elevations and mainly consists of low growing perennial shrubs and annuals.

Riparian vegetation occurs within all of these plant communities, except the alpine tundra. Riparian areas can be important in providing escape cover and fawning habitat. At lower elevations, cottonwood, black oak, interior live oak, and willow are the dominant species. At the upper elevations, in the pinyon woodland area, birch, wild rose, and willow species dominate the riparian habitat. Groves of quaking aspen can be found in drainages within the subalpine forest.

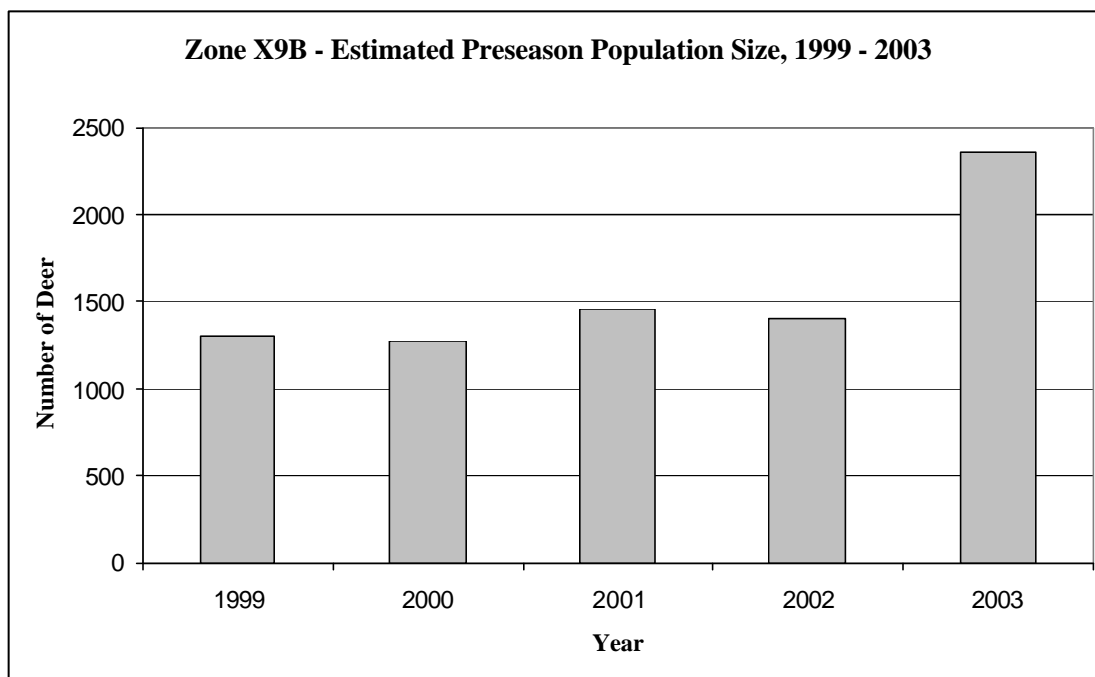
Deer winter ranges exist on alluvial fans at elevations of 4,500 to 6,000 feet. Alluvial fans occur when intermittent streams, resulting mostly from bursts of infrequent rain, rush down steep canyons scouring boulders, soil, and other debris. The flood of water carries the whole mass with it and deposits it on the valley floor at the canyon's mouth. In years of little snow, however, many deer in the Goodale herd spend much of the winter at elevations as high as 8,000 to 9,000 feet. The portion of the winter range with the greatest concentration of deer is that area from Big Pine Creek to Oak Creek.

Summer concentration areas, including fawning areas, are smaller than winter ranges, numerous, and quite widespread. A relatively small percentage of fawning occurs on the east side of the Sierra Nevada. Coyote Flat, Kid and Birch Mountains, and certain areas in Big Pine Canyon are known important fawning areas on the east side. Known fawning areas on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada are LeConte Canyon, Palisades Canyon, Upper Basin, the Bench Lake area, Woods Lake Basin, Sixty Lakes Basin, Vidette Meadow, and Junction Meadow, all within national parks.

Intermediate ranges or holding areas are those sites where migrating deer pause for a time when traveling from one seasonal range to another. Use of holding areas by the Goodale deer herd varies greatly from year to year depending on the amount of snow. Some deer will remain on these areas until forced down by deep snow, while others travel to lower elevation winter ranges before any substantial snowfall has occurred. Known intermediate ranges are Stecker Flat, Shinglemill Bench, and the area above Scotty Spring. In years of little snow, significant numbers of deer remain on these areas through January. This may be important in reducing use of browse plants on key winter ranges at lower elevations. The major mountain passes are used extensively by deer as migration routes. Their probable order of use by numbers of deer is Taboose, Sawmill, Bishop, and Kearsarge. Some use has been noted over Shepherd and Vacation passes.

## **CURRENT GOODALE HERD POPULATION ESTIMATES**

The Goodale deer herd occupies Zone X9B. In spring 2003, this herd had an estimated population of 2,360 deer. The graph below indicates that the 2003 population estimate increased significantly from the herd estimates during the previous four years.



Herd ratios describe the age class (adult and fawn) and sex class (bucks and does) of the herd as a whole. The buck ratio is the number of bucks (spiked or greater) for every one hundred does. The X9B buck ratios are fairly high and have been between 32 and 42 for the past seven years. The 2003 preseason population has a buck ratio of 37 bucks per 100 does, which indicates that about 21% of the population are bucks.

**Zone X9B Buck Ratios, 1997-2003**

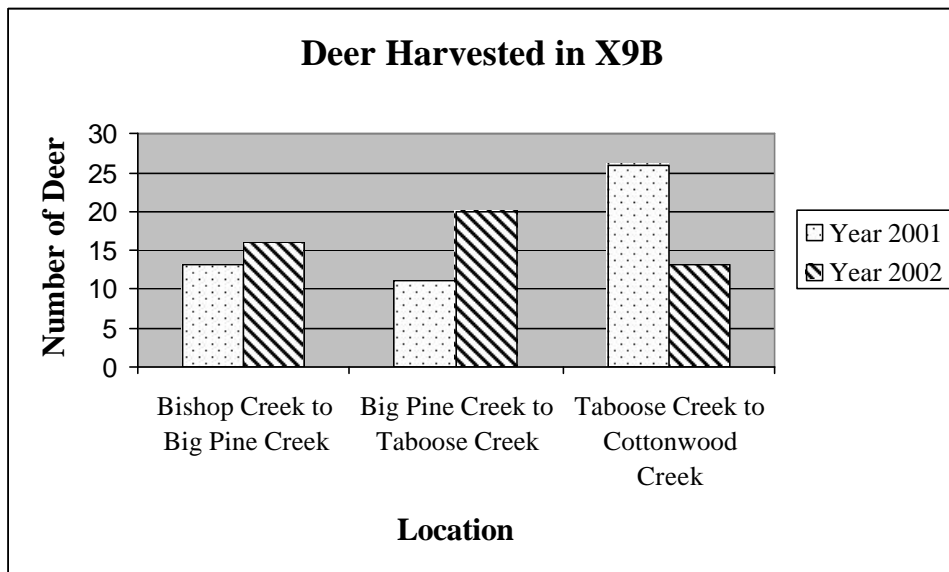
Year	Buck Ratio
1997	42
1998	37
1999	33
2000	40
2001	32
2002	42
2003	37

## **HUNTING INFORMATION**

### ***Where is a good place to find bucks?***

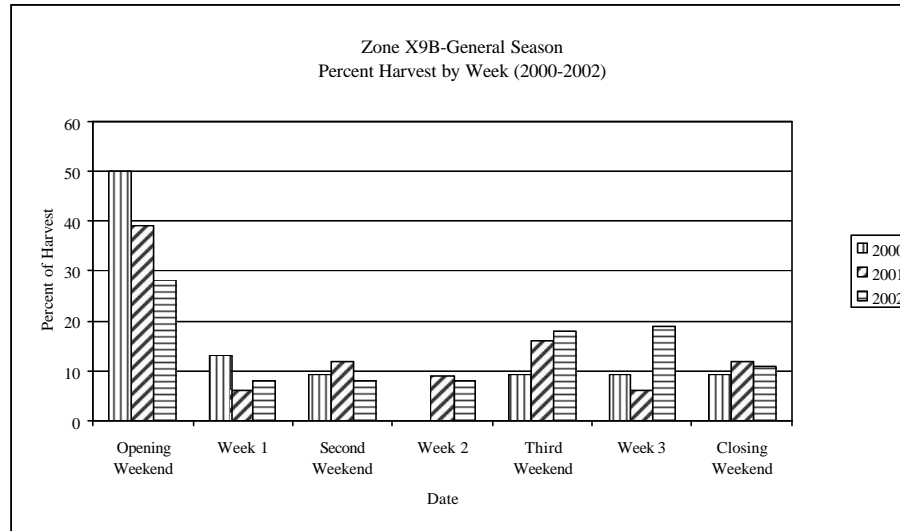
Deer occur throughout the entire zone during the general hunting season. Deer habitat in this area is characterized by open sagebrush scrub and montane chaparral brush fields interspersed with open meadows and groves of aspen and pine forest. Many steep drainages flow east from the Sierra Nevada Crest and these typically support perennial water and lush riparian vegetation. Deer typically occur in association with these riparian areas, as well as other habitats that provide the adequate combinations of food, cover, and water. Vehicle access to the west of Highway 395 and south of Bishop is generally limited to improved roads within major drainages, such as Bishop Creek, Big Pine Creek, Lone Pine Creek, and Cottonwood Creek. In addition, numerous unimproved dirt roads also skirt the base of the Sierra Nevada escarpment. Specific areas to the west of Highway 395 that hunters may want to investigate include South Lake, Palisade/Sage Flat, McMurry Meadows, Onion Valley, Grays Meadow, and Cottonwood Lakes. Much of the zone can only be accessed by hiking. Some of the more commonly used trails are in the South Lake area, Big Pine Canyon, Shepherd Pass, Mt. Whitney area, and New Army Pass/Cottonwood Lakes. Other more difficult and less frequented trails include Taboose Pass, Sawmill Pass, Baxter Pass, and Junction Pass.

The graph below shows the number of deer harvested in key areas throughout the zone for the last two years.



### ***When should I go hunting?***

Typically, more deer are harvested on opening weekend than any other time during the harvest season. The bar graph below shows the percent of deer harvested (Y axis) by week (X axis) for the previous three years (2000-2002).



During each of the three years, a disproportionate (28% - 50%) amount of harvest occurred during the first weekend of the general season. This “higher” harvest may be attributed to the greater number of hunters in the field during opening weekend and to the higher number of bucks available to hunters during the early season. Other factors, including weather and forage conditions, water availability, moon phase, and hunting pressure, may have also influenced hunter success. Hunter harvest, along with hunter pressure, generally declined during the rest of the season. Periods of cold, inclement weather during the later part of the general season can stimulate some deer to migrate from the summer range. Hunters who concentrate their efforts along migration routes leading from the summer range could increase their chance of harvesting one of these late season migrants.

### ***What are my chances of filling my tag?***

The estimated percent hunter success will give you an idea of your chances to harvest a buck. The table below shows the estimated percent hunter success in all of the X zones and the statewide average over the past 10 years. In 2002, 31% of the X9B tag holders harvested a buck.

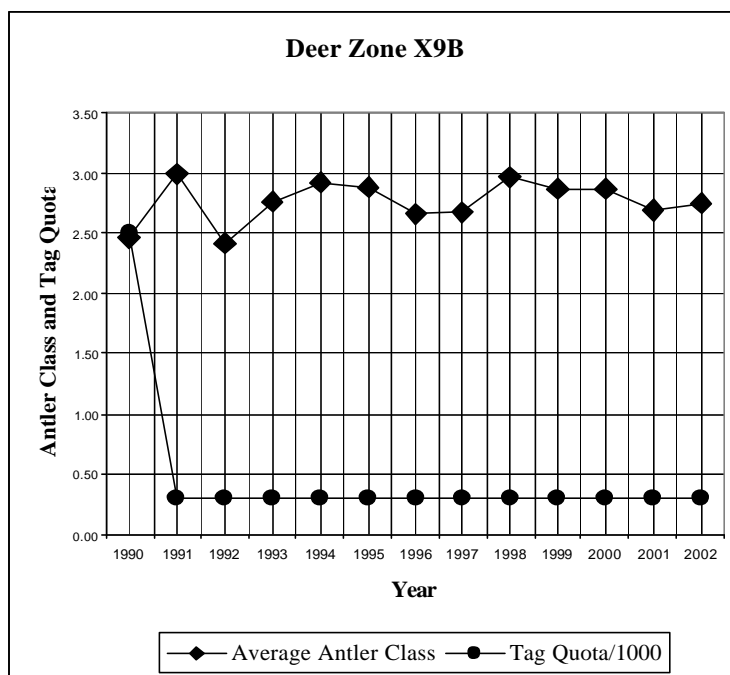
**X Zones and Statewide Average Percent Hunter Success by Year, 1993 - 2002**

Zone or Hunt	Year									
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
X9A	38	45	22	35	31	26	33	27	27	29
X9B	20	20	16	16	21	17	20	18	16	31
X9C	15	13	9	9	8	7	11	12	9	7
X12	34	39	17	30	30	29	32	29	20	16
A16 (X9A Archery)	n/a	7	4	14	9	16	12	13	9	16
A17 (X9B Archery)	n/a	0	0	3	5	0	4	0	4	0
A18 (X9C Archery)	n/a	11	0	7	0	0	27	3	12	3
A20 (X12 Archery)	n/a	15	10	14	13	16	12	14	13	9
Statewide Average*	19	22	16	22	20	18	17	21	18	17

\*Statewide average from 1993 - 1998 does not include Additional or Private Lands Management hunts.

### ***What is the average number of antler points?***

The figure below shows the average antler class of harvested buck and tag quota by year for the general hunt in Zone X9B. Special hunts within the zone and unclassified or unreported bucks are not included. Harvest data collected by the Department over the last three years indicate that 43% of the bucks harvested in Zone X9B were forked-horns, 38% were three-pointers, 18% were four pointers, and 1% were 5 points or greater.



## **GETTING PREPARED** **MAPS, TRAVEL, WEATHER, AND CAMPING**

### **MAPS**

The enclosed Deer Hunt Zone X9B map identifies most of the locations mentioned in this insert. A map showing land ownership is available online at [www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/deer/deer\\_maps.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hunting/deer/deer_maps.html). For maps with more detail, please utilize the sources mentioned in this section.

The USFS Inyo National Forest map and the Bishop and Mt. Whitney BLM maps are good sources to purchase. These maps can be obtained by contacting the USFS, Inyo National Forest at (760) 873-2408, White Mountain Ranger Station at (760) 872-2500, BLM, Ridgecrest Field Office (760)384-5400, or to order maps online visit the BLM website bookstore at [www.store.ca.blm.gov](http://www.store.ca.blm.gov). The Bishop Chamber of Commerce Visitor Guide and the Motor Guide give a general layout of the area, phone (760) 876-4444 or (760) 873-8405. Also, the DeLorme Mapping Company has produced maps that provide a good, large-scale overview of roads within the zone boundaries. The “Northern California Atlas and Gazetteer” covers the area north of Taboose Creek Road within X9B, and the “Southern California Atlas and Gazetteer” covers the area south of Taboose Creek Road within X9B. Both atlases are available at bookstores or through DeLorme at (207) 846-7000. More detail is provided in USGS topographical maps, available at specialty stores, such as camping and hiking products retailers or directly from the U.S. Geological Survey

Distribution Center, Denver Federal Center, Building 810, Box 25286, Denver CO 80225, telephone (303) 202-4700. Some specific 7.5-minute quadrangle maps for portions of the zone include Bishop, Big Pine, Coyote Flat, Fish Springs, Aberdeen, Kearsarge Peak, Independence, Manzanar, Mount Williamson, Lone Pine, and Mount Langley. And finally, another map that may be of value is the American Automobile Association (AAA) map of Bishop, CA.

### **TRAVEL TIPS**

The topography within Zone X9B ranges from flat in the lower elevation valleys to very steep and rocky in the higher mountains of the Sierra Nevada. Most services are located within the various towns scattered along the base of the Sierra Nevada escarpment, including Bishop, Big Pine, Independence, and Lone Pine. Hunters are advised to have full gasoline tanks when entering the field and to carry snow chains, shovel, serviceable spare tire, and extra food and water. Four-wheel-drive vehicles should be used when traveling on unimproved roads within the zone. Be sure to use extra caution when driving off-road and check with USFS or BLM regarding any vehicle travel restrictions that may be in place.

### **WEATHER**

Warm days and cold nights with below freezing temperatures are common during the first half of the season. During the later half of the season, cool days and cold nights are the general rule, with snow often developing at the higher elevations.

### **CAMPING**

***The California Department of Fish and Game is providing this information as a service and has no control over fees and services. Please contact the appropriate agencies regarding fee information, camping restrictions, and other regulations.*** Inyo County has a wide variety of camping opportunities on U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and county lands outlined below. Overnight camping is not allowed on Los Angeles Department of Water and Power lands. For areas where dispersed camping is allowed, you need to obtain a California Campfire Permit for the use of any open flame (including gas stoves, lanterns, wood fires, charcoal fires, or smoking). These permits can be obtained at no cost from any Inyo National Forest Ranger Station and BLM office. Open flame of any kind may be restricted during times of high fire danger; check with the local Forest Service office for current restrictions. For reservable campsites, call the National Recreation Reservation Center at 1-877-444-6777 or visit their website at [www.reserveusa.com](http://www.reserveusa.com).

### **U.S. FOREST SERVICE CAMPGROUNDS**

Contact the USFS, Inyo National Forest field office at 798 North Main St., Bishop, CA 93514. Phone (760) 873-2408.

### **U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT CAMPGROUNDS**

Contact the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100, Bishop, CA 93514. phone:(760) 872-5000 or the Ridgecrest office located at 300 South Richmond Road, Ridgecrest, CA 93555, (760) 384-5400 or visit their website at [www.ca.blm.gov](http://www.ca.blm.gov). and click on Recreation Search.

### **COUNTY CAMPGROUNDS**

The Department of Parks and Recreation is located at the County Services Building, 785 N. Main St., Suite G, Bishop, CA 93514, Phone: (760)878-0272 or visit [www.395.com](http://www.395.com) for camping information in Inyo and Mono counties.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

California Department of Fish and Game, Bishop Field Office (760) 872-1171

U.S. Forest Service, Inyo National Forest (760) 873-2408

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Office (760) 872-5000

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Ridgecrest Office (760) 384-5400